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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/839,141	04/23/2001	Shuichi Shiitani	1359.1044	1624
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STAAS & HALSEY LLP SUITE 700 1201 NEW YORK AVENUE, N.W. WASHINGTON, DC 20005			EXAMINER GART, MATTHEW S	
			ART UNIT 3625	PAPER NUMBER
			MAIL DATE 06/29/2007	DELIVERY MODE PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/839,141

Applicant(s)

SHITANI ET AL.

Examiner

Matthew S. Gart

Art Unit

3625

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 29 May 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 and 17-25 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 and 17-25 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 5/29/2007 has been entered.

Prosecution History Summary

- Claims 1-10 and 17-25 are pending in the instant application.
- Claims 11-16 were previously canceled.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 1-10, 17-22 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. The independent claims recite, "...calculating similarity among a plurality of search resultant article pictures..." However, the specification as originally filed does not enable one of ordinary skill in the art to ascertain the scope and methodology behind said calculation.

Claims 1-10, 17-22 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter (i.e., "...calculating similarity among a plurality of search resultant article pictures...") which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1-10, 17-22 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Referring to claims 1-10, 17-22 and 25. All the claims are replete with grammatical and typographical errors, which cause the scope of said claims difficult to ascertain. Applicant's cooperation is requested to review all the pending claims and correct all errors found within.

Below is a listing of a few of said errors:

Clm. 1, ln. 4: The term "similarity" should be replaced with "similarities." This error is repeated throughout every independent claim.

Clm. 1, ln.11: The language "...being independent of the data sending rank defining an order in which said search resultant article pictures are to be sent..." is unclear and it's scope ambiguous. This error is repeated throughout every independent claim.

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CIm. 1, ln. 9-12: Claim 1 was amended to set forth that, "...said article picture arrangement data indicating arrangement positions of said search resultant article pictures on a screen of the user terminal and being independent of the data sending rank..." The examiner notes in the "upon receiving" step of claim 1 the article picture arrangement data is dependent upon the data sending rank. It is unclear on how the article picture arrangement data can be independent of the data sending rank, when it was previously dependent upon the data sending rank. Claims 2-10 are dependent upon claim 1 and acquire the deficiencies of claim 1.

CIm. 25, ln. 9: The language in line 9 ("results during an online shopping...") is unclear. The Examiner is interpreting this as, results during an online shopping session.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-10 and 17-25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maes (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0002502) in view of Shultz (U.S. Patent Application Publication 2003/0061211).

Referring to claims 1. Maes discloses an online shopping method, comprising:

- Previously generating/preparing article data in which features of an article picture and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information (Maes: paragraph 0048 through paragraph 0050 and paragraph 0057 through paragraph 0059);
- Upon receiving an article search by a user, generating article picture arrangement data of all search resultant article pictures in which similar features of the search resultant article pictures are disposed on a two-dimensional plane (Maes: paragraph 0051 through paragraph 0052 and paragraph 0059);
- Sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal (Maes: paragraph 0051 through paragraph 0052 and paragraph 0059), said article picture arrangement data indicating arrangement positions of said search resultant article pictures on a screen of the user terminal; and

- Displaying each of the search resultant article picture at each arrangement position on the screen of the user terminal as initial search results in a receiving order (Maes: paragraph 0054 through paragraph 0055).

Maes does not expressly disclose an online shopping method, comprising:

- Upon receiving an article search by a user, calculating similarities among a plurality of search resultant article pictures, the more similar the results are in the features, the more closely the results are disposed and sending the search resultant article pictures in accordance with the data sending rank;
- Sending the search resultant article pictures in accordance with the data sending rank; and
- Displaying each of the search resultant article picture at each arrangement position in accordance with the article picture arrangement data on a screen of the user terminal, thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the arrangement position.

Shultz discloses an online shopping method, comprising:

- Upon receiving an article search by a user, calculating similarities among a plurality of search resultant article pictures, the more similar the results are in the features, the more closely the results are disposed and sending the search resultant article pictures in accordance with the data sending rank; (Shultz: paragraph 0060);

- Sending the search resultant article pictures in accordance with the data sending rank (Shultz: paragraph 0061); and
- Displaying each of the search resultant article picture at each arrangement position in accordance with the article picture arrangement data on a screen of the user terminal, thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the arrangement position (Shultz: paragraph 0061).

The Examiner notes, Shultz discloses a method wherein information may subsequently be sorted according to user preference and/or a predefined search result sorting routine. Such sorting may pertain to specific sorting criteria, for example, by order of importance, relevance or hierarchy of the information retrieved from database 133. Example sorting criterion might include, a distance from the user identified location (e.g., step 232), corresponding advertising information (e.g., step 234) and/or business information (e.g., step 236). Business information may be sorted according to various criteria, for example, alphabetical criteria, such as by the name of the business, size criteria, such as the size of the business, price criteria, time criteria, event criteria, or any other sorting criteria that might be helpful to a user (Shultz: paragraph 0060). At the time of the invention was made, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art to have modified the system of Maes to have included the teachings of Shultz because, unfortunately conventional search engines often return a wide range of unusable search results (Shultz: paragraph 0006).

Referring to claim 2. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein the features of the article picture arrangement data is generated in accordance with a combination of a similarity of a feature of each resultant article picture and at least one selected from the group consisting, a keyword representing the feature of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof (Maes: paragraph 0048 through paragraph 0052).

Referring to claim 3. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider (Maes: paragraphs 0050).

Referring to claim 4. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the notified items (Maes: paragraph 0054).

Referring to claim 5. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the analyzed items (Maes: paragraph 0097).

Referring to claim 6. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article (Maes: Figure 3 through Figure 6).

Referring to claim 7. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider ((Maes: paragraph 0048 through paragraph 0052).

Referring to claim 8. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the notified items (Maes: paragraph 0054 through paragraph 0055).

Referring to claim 9. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the analyzed items (Maes: paragraph 0097).

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Referring to claim 10. Maes further discloses an online shopping method wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article (Maes: Figure 3 through Figure 6).

Referring to claims 17-20. Claims 17-20 are rejected under the same rationale as set forth above in claims 1-10.

Referring to claims 21-22. Claims 21-22 are rejected under the same rationale as set forth above in claims 1-10.

Referring to claim 23. Claims 23 is rejected under the same rationale as set forth above in claims 1-10.

Referring to claim 24. Claims 24 is rejected under the same rationale as set forth above in claims 1-10.

Referring to claim 25. Claims 25 is rejected under the same rationale as set forth above in claims 1-10.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 5/29/2007 with respect to the pending claims were considered but are not persuasive.

The Applicant argues, neither Maes nor Shultz teach or suggest calculating similarity among search resultant article pictures.

The Examiner notes, Shultz discloses a method wherein information may subsequently be sorted according to user preference and/or a predefined search result sorting routine, whereby said sorting routine results in a similarity calculation. Such sorting (or calculating) may pertain to specific sorting criteria, for example, by order of importance, relevance or hierarchy of the information retrieved from database 133. Example sorting criterion might include, a distance from the user identified location (e.g., step 232), corresponding advertising information (e.g., step 234) and/or business information (e.g., step 236). Business information may be sorted according to various criteria, for example, alphabetical criteria, such as by the name of the business, size criteria, such as the size of the business, price criteria, time criteria, event criteria, or any other sorting criteria that might be helpful to a user (Shultz: paragraph 0060). At the time of the invention was made, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art to have modified the system of Maes to have included the teachings of Shultz because, unfortunately conventional search engines often return a wide range of unusable search results (Shultz: paragraph 0006).

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Matthew S. Gart whose telephone number is 571-272-3955. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 9-6.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jeff Smith can be reached on 571-272-6763. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

MSG
Primary Examiner
June 17, 2007


MATTHEW S GART
PRIMARY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600